

St Johns Road QRP Summary Reports:

20.03.20 – Formal review of Epping Town Centre Sites

- While supporting the emerging work, the panel thinks there is scope to be bolder.
- The panel recommends further work to define, proactively manage, protect and measure 'quality', through each RIBA stage of work.
- The panel recommends embedding clear sustainability commitments at RIBA Stage 1 or 2, which could include precedent research for criteria such as Passivhaus.
- It highlights the benefits of early community engagement.
- The panel encourages options testing for the mix and location of key Town Centre functions and non-residential land uses. It also suggests broadening the spatial scope of the Brief, to look beyond red line boundaries and consider the relationship between the five sites and the high street, including potential public realm improvements.
- The panel urges a holistic view of the whole town centre to inform key design moves on each site.
- The panel thinks the current approach to car parking is unresolved. It highlights the huge potential to encourage sustainable travel and adopt a flexible future-proofed strategy to car parking and travel.

10.07.20 – Formal review of Epping Town Centre Sites

- The panel thinks a more convincingly comprehensive approach is developing.
- It strongly welcomes reconsideration of the leisure centre location and multi-storey car park proposals.
- The panel is yet to be convinced on the analysis undertaken to support the current approach to town centre functions, or rationale for the housing typologies, tenure and mix. While it broadly supports the uses suggested, it is unclear why specific uses are being directed to specific sites.
- It strongly recommends further work to ensure exemplary housing design, including revisiting typologies, internal arrangements and layouts. The panel would like to see more detail at a framework level before planning application details are developed, including on: routes, broader connectivity, servicing, edges, integration and retail arrangements.
- It continues to strongly urge early engagement to develop the project vision – so people can feel genuine agency in informing proposals.

17.09.20 – Workshop review of Epping Town Centre Sites

- The Panel applauds the substantial work undertaken since the last review.
- The approach taken to engagement is commendable and should be valuable in informing ongoing design work.
- The panel continues to stress the importance of looking beyond physical building elements – to engage with the social, not just physical development of the centre. It would have expected to see mapping – analysing the social and cultural offer that already exists in the centre. This would then be used to inform an approach to 'fill in these gaps'.
- The panel encourages developing a meanwhile strategy, and exploring the potential for small scale public realm interventions.

- Greater clarity is needed on how individual sites and public realm will be phased, funded and delivered including the delivery of public realm improvements.

The panel continues to strongly urge that the council re-consider the 'no net loss' approach to car parking – and follow an evidence-based approach to parking and sustainable travel.

16.10.20 –Site Specific Workshop review

- The panel is broadly supportive of the approach to the development of the St. Johns Road site but recommends further consideration of a number of aspects including the proposed mix of uses, massing, routes, streetscape and car parking.
- While it considers a predominantly residential use appropriate, the panel encourages the inclusion of ground floor non-residential uses in the Centrepoint building to activate the street frontage.
- The panel asks the design team to ensure access and routes have a clear purpose and hierarchy. The masterplan should also take potential development on adjacent sites into account.
- The design team is encouraged to ensure the massing responds to the local morphology, streetscape and urban grain.
- It encourages a significant reconfiguration of Block F, which it considers to be too large and unsympathetic to the local character.
- The design approach should take detailed cues from Epping town centre typologies, with a more unified architectural approach and simpler material palette.
- The proposed green spaces are beneficial, but the same design attention should also be paid to the quality of the proposed streetscape.
- Undercroft parking should be reconsidered, to improve the relationship between ground floor and street.
- The Woodland Walk is welcomed, but greater consideration should be given to introducing passive surveillance.
- The panel welcomes the aspirations to achieve Passivhaus standards, and encourages an equivalent boldness in the development's approach to biodiversity, for example including native habitats.

05.03.21 – Site Specific Formal review

- The panel supports many aspects of the proposals for the St John's Road site, but notes several areas require further development, notably the public realm quality, landscape, architecture expression and sustainability strategies. It is important that these are addressed prior to planning submission.
- The public realm could respond more positively and actively to the wider urban context, including more civic uses on the ground floors that face public streets and better defined public and private areas.
- The character and design of internal street to access the car parks requires further thought to prioritise the pedestrian experience and car parking should be reduced further.
- The overall route into the site would benefit from more active frontages.
- The landscape strategy should be more ambitious, drawing on the character of Epping town centre, with a coherent approach to all the Qualis sites. Biodiversity gains and the ecological value of open spaces should be clearly defined.
- The use of architectural elements, such as gables and balconies, should help define a hierarchy among the buildings, and also relate to how this development addresses the High Street and St Johns Road.
- All elevations should respond to their orientation and environmental factors and sustainability studies should be actively translated into the designs.

- The depth of the facade, the materials chosen and detailing of architectural elements are essential to delivering the intended design quality. Mock-ups, samples, bay studies and key details should be part of the planning application submission.

General comments relating to all five town centre sites:

- These developments on council owned land create an opportunity to deliver exemplar development, in terms of design quality and environmental sustainability.
- A lot of valuable work was done looking at the relationship between the five Qualis sites and Epping town centre. This should be captured in an Area Action Plan, or similar document, endorsed by the council, so that this work is not lost.
- A more site-specific approach to environmental sustainability is needed, so that the layout and façade design of buildings responds to orientation and context.
- Achieving modal shift will require new development to make car use less convenient, so that walking and cycling become preferred options.
- The panel thinks the relationship between the architectural character of each site needs further thought.